

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 4770

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SW

SUBJECT: ELECTION SITUATION OF THE SWEDISH COMMUNIST PARTY AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

REF: (A) STOCKHOLM A-41, (B) STOCKHOLM 4736

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE SWEDISH COMMUNITY PARTY (VPK),
LED BY CHAIRMAN LARS WERNER, IS STRUGGLING FOR ITS
PARLIAMENTARY SURVIVAL IN THE SEPTEMBER 19 ELECTIONS.
THE OUTCOME MAY WELL DETERMINE THE FATE OF THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS, WHO FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS HAVE RELIED
ON THE SUPPORT OF THE VPK'S 19-SEAT BLOC IN THE
RIKSDAG TO REMAIN IN POWER. END SUMMARY.

2. IN SWEDISH NATIONAL ELECTIONS, A POLITICAL PARTY
IS REQUIRED TO RECEIVED FOUR PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL
VOTE IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE SEATS IN THE RIKSDAG.
POLLS FROM THE BEGINNING OF 1976 INDICATE VPK HAS
BEEN HOVERING BETWEEN 3.5 AND 4.5 PERCENT MARK.
SHOULD THE COMMUNISTS' SHARE OF THE VOTE DIP BELOW
THE REQUIRED FOUR PERCENT ON ELECTION DAY, THEY
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WILL AUTOMATICALLY LOSE THEIR SEATS IN THE RIKSDAG

AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WILL BE LEFT TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES.

3. ANOTHER FEATURE OF THE SWEDISH LAW FOR PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION PROVIDES THAT ANY PARTY RECEIVING AT LEAST 12 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN ANY ONE DISTRICT MUST RECEIVE AT LEAST ONE SEAT IN THE RIKSDAG. SINCE THE VPK IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO POLL MORE THAN 12 PERCENT IN THE NORBOTTEN DISTRICT IN THE NORTH, WHERE IT IS RELATIVELY STRONG, THE COMMUNISTS ARE LIKELY TO WIN AT LEAST ONE SEAT EVEN IF THEY LOSE THEIR NATIONAL REPRESENTATION.

4. NOT THE LEAST OF THE REASONS FOR THE VPK'S DIFFICULTIES IS THE BITTER INTRA-PARTY STRUGGLE BETWEEN STALINISTS AND MODERATES WHICH THREATENED TO SPLIT THE PARTY LAST YEAR (REF A), AND WHICH STILL FESTERS IN SPITE OF DETERMINED EFFORTS TO PAPER IT OVER BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. SEVERAL RECENT INSTANCES OF BARELY SUBMERGED HOSTILITY BREAKING INTO THE OPEN BETWEEN THE REBELLIOUS STALINIST FACTION IN THE NORTH AND THE CONTROLLING MODERATES INDICATE HOW THIN THE CEMENT IS WHICH HOLDS THE VPK TOGETHER.

5. THE STALINISTS HAVE CHARGED THAT THE VPK LEADERSHIP IS PLANNING AN ELECTION TRICK TO REPLACE THE STALINIST RIKSDAGMAN ALF LOVENBERG IN THE CRUCIAL NORBOTTEN DISTRICT WITH A LOYALIST. THIS PROMPTED A FLURRY OF ACrimonious EXCHANGES. SUBSEQUENTLY LOVENBERG OPENLY DEFIED VPK LEADER WERNER'S INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO ATTEND A RALLY WITH A PARTY MEMBER WHO HAD BEEN EXPELLED. LOVENBERG TOLD THE PRESS THAT "COMRADE WERNER HAS NO STATUTORY RIGHT TO FORBID ME FROM DOING SO." WERNER LATER ATTEMPTED TO MINIMIZE THE INCIDENT AND ACCUSED THE PRESS OF DELIBERATELY EXAGGERATING THE DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE VPK.

6. SINCE LOVENBERG IS THE CANDIDATE FROM NORBOTTEN, HE COULD CONCEIVABLY BECOME THE SOLE VPK REPRESENTATIVE
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IN THE RIKSDAG

7. THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND OPPOSITION MEMBERS ALIKE HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED DOUBT TO US THAT THE VPK WILL BE ABLE TO GARNER THE REQUIRED FOUR PERCENT TO KEEP ITS SEATS. WITH THE AUGUST PUBLIC OPINION POLLS (REF B) SHOWING AN INCREASE FOR THE VPK FROM FOUR PERCENT IN JUNE TO

4.5 PERCENT, ITS CHANCES LOOK SLIGHTLY BETTER
BUT NOT BY ANY MEANS CERTAIN, DESPITE WERNER'S
PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT VPK SUPPORT IS STABLE.
(IN AUGUST 1973 THE VPK HAD 5.5 PERCENT IN THE
POLLS, AND RECEIVED 5.3 PERCENT OF THE ACTUAL VOTE.)

8. A HIGHLY PLACED SDP OFFICIAL RECENTLY
SPECULATED TO EMBASSY OFFICER ON THE UNLIKELY BUT
POSSIBLE OUTCOME THAT VPK WOULD NOT RECEIVE FOUR
PERCENT BUT WOULD RETAIN ITS NORBOTTEN SEAT, WHILE
THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND THE OPPOSITION SPLIT
THEIR SEATS IN THE RIKSDAG 174-174 (TOTAL SEATS 349).
THIS WOULD CREATE, HE POINTED OUT, THE UNCOMFORTABLE
CIRCUMSTANCE OF PLACING THE DECIDING VOTE IN
PARLIAMENT IN THE HANDS OF A STALINIST VPK MEMBER.
WHILE HE CONCEDED THERE IS SMALL CHANCE OF THIS
HAPPENING, HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS ALSO LITTLE
CHANCE OF THE SOCIALIST AND OPPOSITION BLOCS
SPLITTING THEIR RIKSDAG SEATS 175-175 IN THE 1973
ELECTIONS.

9. IF VPK FAILS TO WIN FOUR PERCENT OF THE VOTE,
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WILL BE IN A DIFFICULT POSITION.
THEY WILL HAVE TO HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE ADVANCES
IN THEIR OWN PERCENTAGE TO COMPENSATE FOR THE
LOST VPK SUPPORT IN THE RIKSDAG IF THEY ARE TO
REMAIN IN POWER. EVEN IF MOST DEFECTING VPK
SUPPORTERS VOTE FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, THE SDP
WILL STILL HAVE TO PICK UP A COUPLE OF PERCENTAGE
POINTS ON THEIR OWN TO MAINTAIN THEIR CONTROL IN
THE RIKSDAG IF THE VPK BLOC OF 19 SEATS DISAPPEARS.
IN THE PRESENT EXTREMELY TIGHT RACE, WITH THE
OPPOSITION LEADING THE COMBINED VPK AND SDP
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SUPPORT BY FOUR PERCENT IN THE POLLS THAT WILL BE
A DIFFICULT TASK.
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